

## Message Text

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ACTION NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W

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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 6927

S E C R E T DAMASCUS 0995

NODIS

FOR ATHERTON FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: OVIP (ATHERTION, ALFRED L., JR.) XF, US

SUBJ: ATHERTON'S VISIT

REF: STATE 42286

SUMMARY. DECISION IS FINAL THAT ATHERTON  
SOUULD NOT RPT NOT VISIT SYRIA DURING CURRENT MISSION.

1. MET WITH KHADDAM SATURDAY MORNING (HE APOLOGIZED FOR  
NOT HAVING BEEN ABLE RECEIVE ME FRIDAY EVENING BECAUSE OF  
FAMILY ILLNESS.) MADE TALKING POINTS REFTEL AND ADDED IN SUMMING UP  
OUR VIEW OF VISIT THAT I DID NOT RPT NOT VIEW IT AS  
INCONSISTENT WITH SYRIA'S LEADERSHIP OF THE STEADFASTNESS  
MOVEMENT, MUCH LESS ITS NON-ALIGNED STATUS, TO HAVE  
CONTACTS AT A POLICY MAKING LEVEL WITH ALL OTHER  
LEADERSHIPS CONCERNED WITH THE PEACE PROCESS.

2. KHADDAM REPLIED THAT HE WISHED TO STRESS THAT SYRIA'S  
STAND CONCERNING THE VISIT HAS ABSOLUTELY NO BEARING ON  
THE QUESTION OF CONTINUING CONTACT BETWEEN SARG AND  
USG. DAMASCUS DEFINITELY WISHED TO CONTINUE THESE. HOWEVER,  
IRRESPECTIVE OF ANY STATEMENT WHICH MIGHT

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BE ISSUED, VISIT ITSELF WOULD GIVE THE IMPRESSION  
THAT SYRIA WILL JOIN THE PRESENT NEGOTIATIONS AT A LATER  
STAGE. SYRIA HAD DECLARED ON NUMEROUS OCCASIONS THAT  
THE PRESENT COURSE WILL NOT LEAD TO "SERIOUS AND  
PRACTICAL RESULTS THAT WOULD ACHIEVE THE JUST PEACE WE  
ALL DESIRE". EVEN IF THE STATEMENT SAID THAT SYRIA DOES  
NOT AGREE TO ENTER INTO NEGOTIATIONS AT THIS STAGE

ATHERTON'S VISIT WOULD CONFUSE SYRIA PUBLIC OPINION.  
FONMIN EMPHASIZED "WE ARE EXTREMELY KEEN NOT TO CLASH  
WITH OUR PUBLIC OPINION; IF BELIEVES THAT  
THE PEACE PROCESS HAS BEEN BADLY UNDERMINED BY THE ACTS  
OF THE EGYPTIAN PRESIDENT AND HIS METHODS."  
∴ SYRIA'S DESIRE FOR A JUST PEACE, HE ADDED,  
IS CONSTANT AND ASSAD HAS RECENTLY REAFFIRMED THIS  
IN HIS OWN PRESS STATEMENTS AND INSKAFD THAT IT WAS REFLECTED  
IN THE ALGIERS SUMMIT DECLARATION. BUT SYRIA DOES NOT RPT NOT  
SEE CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS AS CONSITUTING A SOUND COURSE  
WHICH CAN LEAD TO SYRIAN GOALS:  
ESTABLISHMENT OF A JUST PEACE BASED ON COMPLETE ISRAELI  
WITHDRAWAL FROM ALL THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES AND  
PROVIDING THE INALIENABLE NAL RIGHTS OF THE  
PALESTINIAN PEOPLE, IN ACCORD WITH THE RELAVANT  
US RESOLUTIONS INCLUDING THE RIGHT TO RETURN, SELF  
DETERMINATION AND THE RIGHT TO ESTABLISH THEIR  
INDEPENDENT STATE.

4. FONMIN SAID HE HOPED USG WILL UNDERSTAND SYRIA'S  
STAND IS BASED ON A KEEN DESIRE FOR A JUST PEACE AND  
WHY IT CONSIDERS THAT CURRENT STEPS ARE IMPEDING ITS  
ACHIEVEMENT. HE AGAIN STRESSED SARG'S DESIRE TO  
CONTINUE CONTACTS AND EXCHANGES OF VIEWS WITH THE USG.  
HOWEVER, SYRIA VIEWS ATHERTON'S PROPOSED VISIT AS  
"CAUSING CONSIDERABLE DAMAGE TO US AND OUR PUBLIC  
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OPINION."

5. I REPLIED I THOUGHT WASHINGTON UNDERSTOOD SYRIA'S  
POSITION QUITE WELL BUT I WAS CONVINCED  
THERE WAS CONSIDERABLE RISK SYRIANS WILL MISUNDERSTAND  
THE AMERICAN POSITION AND ATHERTON WOULD BE ABLE TO  
CLARIFY FOR DAMASCUS A NUMBER OF HIGHLY COMPLEX ISSUES.  
NOTED, HOWEVER, THAT THE FONMIN HAD APPARENTLY GIVEN ME  
THE FINAL POSITION. SAID WE RESPECT SYRIA'S DECISION AND WILL  
BE GUIDED BY ITS WISHES. NOTED HE SHOULD BEAR IN  
MIND HOWEVER, THINKING AHEAD ABOUT FUTURE CONTACTS WITH  
WASHINGTON BASED OFFICIALS, THAT PRES. CARTER AND THE SECRETARY  
ARE SERIOUSLY CONSIDERING DESIGNATING ATHERTON AS OUR KEY  
OFFICIAL FOR LIAISON ON ALL ASPECTS OF THE PEACE PROCESS  
WITH THE CONCERNED PARTIES.  
KHADDAM SAID HE WAS AWARE OF THIS AND "POSSIBLY IN  
OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES THERE MAY BE CONTACTS. HOWEVER,  
IN THE PRESENT CONJUNCTURE WE CANNOT JUSTIFY SUCH  
CONTACT TO OUR PEOPLE" HE CONCLUDED BY ASSURING  
ME HE WOULD BE AVAILABLE TO RECEIVE ME AT  
ANY TIME ON ANY ASPECT OF THE PEACE PROCESS AND ANY  
OTHER PROBLEM. (HE ADDED GOOD HUMOREDLY THAT SYRIA

ALSO UNDERSTANDS USG HAS BEEN HOPING FOR THIRTY YEARS  
TO CREATE CONDITIONS FOR DIRECT CONTACTS BETWEEN ARABS  
AND ISRAELIS AND NOW SADAT HAD "DROPPED FROM HEAVEN  
TO ANSWER YOUR PRAYER.)

6. WE HAD A BRIEF EXCHANGE OF LEBANESE SITUATION WHICH  
KHADDAM CONTINUES TO BELIEVE IS STABILIZING.  
AFTER HE EXCUSED HIMSELF TO RETURN TO HIS OWN OFFICE  
FOR A MEETING, WHICH HE HAD INTERRUPTED TO SEE ME; SHIS INTERPRETER  
SHRUGGED AND OBSERVED IT OBVIOUSLY WAS A DELICATE MOMENT FOR SYRIA,  
PARTICULARLY IN VIEW OF HOW IRAQI PROPAGANDISTS WOULD  
EXPLOIT AN AHERTON VISIT.  
CONSIDERATION OF LEBYAN REACTION MIGHT ALSO BE  
INFLUENCING SARG. WE BOTH AGREED SYRIAN PUBLIC OPINION WAS  
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NOT THE ISSUE.

7. COMMENT: I SENSED NO EDGINESS ON  
KHADDAM'S PART OVER MY RETURNING FOR THIS SECOND DISCUSSION  
OF YOUR POSSIBLE VISIT. I THINK THE ADDITIONAL TALKING  
POINTS PROVIDED REFTTEL-WHICH WERE CAREFULLY RECORDED  
AND WILL BE IN ASSAD'S HANDS LATER TODAY-  
WILL EVENTUALLY HAVE A POSITIVE EFFECT BUT I DO NOT  
ANTICIPATE A REVERSAL OF POSITION AFFECTING YOUR PRESENT  
TRIP. ASKED WHEN ASSAD WOULD RETURN FROM MOSCOW  
KHADDAM SAID IT WOULD BE NEXT WEEKEND AND CONFIRMED THERE NO  
VISIT PLANNED TO FOLLOW DIRECTLY AFTER MOSCOW.

8. I WOULD FIND IT MOST USEFUL TO MEET WITH YOU SOME-  
WHERE DURING YOUR UPCOMING TRIP TO REVIEW  
DEVELOPMENTS. A GET TOGETHER EITHER IN AMMAN OR SAUDI  
ARABIA WOULD SEEM BEST.  
MURPHY

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 jan 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, PEACE, GOVERNMENT REACTIONS, VISITS, MEETINGS, NEGOTIATIONS, CAT-B  
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**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 18 feb 1978  
**Decaption Date:** 01 jan 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 20 Mar 2014  
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**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** FOR ATHERTON FROM AMB  
**Executive Order:** X1  
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**Expiration:**  
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**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
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**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** ATHERTON'S VISIT  
**TAGS:** OVIP, PBOR, XF, US, SY, (ATHERTON, ALFRED L JR)  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
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